according to the patterns fixed in previous dynasties. This may have been in part because the Manchus, wishing, for reasons of political expediency, to prove themselves supporters of Chinese civilization, maintained orthodoxy with all the zeal of conscious converts. It may also have been because the Ch'ing Emperors, in their eagerness to prevent sedition and to root out any threat to their rule, endeavored to suppress cultural heterodoxy. Their emphasis, too, on the civil service examinations—through which lay the paths to social prestige, power, and wealth—induced most ambitious youths to confine themselves to the well-defined curriculum which led to the coveted degrees. The system first foreshadowed by the Han was being carried to its logical conclusion. Originality and experimentation, were inconsistent with its perfect operation. Great prosperity was accompanied by adherence to past conventions. Even so, however, a few of the intellectuals were active in a movement of marked boldness and critical acumen which was to have important consequences.

In the last three-quarters of a century that the Manchus were on the throne, when their vigor was declining and the power slipping from their hands, came the greatest cultural revolution that the Chinese have ever known. It was then that the Occident at last surmounted the natural barriers which had prevented it from establishing intimate intercourse with the Middle Kingdom. Under the vigorous impact of the West the familiar structure of Chinese life crumbled. The traditional political, intellectual, and, to a certain extent, economic, social, and religious institutions disappeared or were profoundly modified. The changes into which the country was hurried proved more thoroughgoing even than

after the collapse of the Chou, when the Ch'in and the Han rulers established the Empire, or than in the centuries after the Han, when Buddhism was being established. They seem, indeed, even yet only to have begun.

The dynasty, accordingly, naturally falls into two parts, one before the coming of the Westerner in force, and the other after that event. The dividing years are 1839-1842, when, in a successful war on China, Great Britain led what proved to be the vanguard of the great invasion. The first of these periods forms the subject of this chapter. More than half of it is included in the reigns of two of the ablest monarchs that China has ever had,